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Declares SAC Still Greatest Striking Force

Head of Armed Services
Committee In Comment
After Secret Briefing

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chairman Richard B. Russell of the Senate Armed Services Committee says the U.S. Strategic Air Command is still "the most destructive striking force now in operation."

Russell, a Georgia Democrat, made the comment Wednesday after his committee held a top-secret briefing on Soviet military might.

Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and defense intelligence leaders presented what Russell called "a highly classified briefing on our strength and their best estimates of any potential enemy strength."

The briefings continue today with Secretary of the Army Elvis J. Stahr Jr., and Gen. George H. Decker, Army chief of staff, scheduled to outline details of army procurement under military budget revisions by President Kennedy.

Russell told newsmen that top U.S. military estimates of Soviet and air missile strength "have varied greatly from year to year."

He said there was some reason to believe "that we are stabilizing our intelligence estimates of the Soviets' power."

Russell made no mention of the "missile gap" controversy which

was an issue of the last political campaign.

Under former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Pentagon civilian leaders frequently were charged by Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., and other Democrats with revising and downgrading the earlier intelligence estimates of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Russell said the latest intelligence presentation, which included data assembled by the Central Intelligence Agency, included "increases in some items and decreases in others."

He said the highly secret nature of the military data prevented additional discussion publicly.

"But I can say I still think that SAC is the most destructive striking force and the greatest deterrent on earth," the senator said.

"No sane person would ever put the lives of his people or the fate of his nation in danger by a sneak missile attack on us in the immediate future."